



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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# Utahns More Susceptible to Skin Cancer

*New Awareness Campaign reminds Utahns "Don't Take the Sun Lightly"*

**(SALT LAKE CITY, May 16, 2003)** – Utah's population is more prone to skin cancer than others in the U.S. in part due to the state's high altitude, large number of sunny days, and access to outdoor activities according to the Utah Cancer Action Network (UCAN). Because of this increased risk, UCAN, a network of more than 70 organizations has launched a new campaign telling parents to protect their skin and their children's' from the sun all year round.

The more time people spend in the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays, the more likely they are to develop skin cancer. "Most Utahns are Caucasian, have fair skin and tend to burn easily, but people of all races should limit their time in the sun as well," says Glen Bowen, M.D., Assistant Professor of Dermatology, University Hospital/Huntsman Cancer Institute.

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in Utah and in the U.S. In 2003, an estimated 54,200 persons in the U.S. will be diagnosed with melanoma, the most serious kind of skin cancer. About 7,600 people will die in the U.S. this year from melanoma.

"One serious sunburn with blisters in childhood can increase your risk of skin cancer by 78 percent," says Janet Heins, skin cancer campaign coordinator for the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and UCAN member. "That is why we are urging parents to teach their children to cover-up and use sunscreen daily. We have a lot of work to do because about 70 percent of Utahns do not routinely use sunscreen."

UCAN suggests the following tips to reduce the risk of skin cancer:

- Wear protective clothing (i.e. long pants and long sleeves) as well as hats and sunglasses that protect all parts of the body and face.

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- Wear wrap-around sunglasses that block close to 100 percent of UV rays.
- Avoid the sun by staying in the shade or indoors during the peak UV hours from 10 am to 4 pm.
- When outdoors, use sunscreen with an SPF 15 (sun protection factor) or higher. Apply sunscreen freely, evenly and frequently.
- Don't "fake bake" by using tanning beds and sunlamps.

The new skin cancer awareness campaign includes radio, TV, newspaper and billboard messages advising parents: "Don't take the sun lightly, cover up or use sunscreen on you and your children every day." A new TV commercial begins with a strong parental warning about the graphic depiction of ultraviolet rays penetrating the skin, and then features children innocently playing in the sun not aware of any danger because the rays are invisible.

Radio ads convey that if the sun's ultraviolet rays were as obvious as a giant poisonous spider or a scary clown with a flamethrower, parents would protect their children without question. The new ads warn parents that the sun is an unseen killer requiring regular attention, because one bad sunburn (with blisters) in childhood or teenage years heightens the risk of all types of skin cancer.

"We hope that our campaign will help parents understand the importance of protecting themselves and their children from the sun all year round," said Heins. "If parents protect their children now, they can have the peace of mind that their children will be less likely to get skin cancer as adults."

UCAN is launching the "Don't Take The Sun Lightly" campaign for National Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month in May. For more information go to [www.ucan.cc](http://www.ucan.cc) or call the information line at 1-888-222-2542.

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